



Information on the 121 project

What we do: 121 Befriending Services is a community-based project aiming to support young people experiencing crisis in their lives. We work in a number of districts in Kent including Dartford, Gravesham, Swanley, Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling. Young people are referred to 121 befriending from a number of sources, including Social Services, Health Visitors, Welfare and Behavioural Services, Community Youth Workers, Homestart, Schools and Parents and Carers.

Who do we help? We help young people from age six to sixteen years experiencing crisis, social disadvantage, unhappiness and isolation. Some may also have extra needs around communication and behaviour. We aim to respond to their needs in a way that benefits their social and emotional wellbeing.

Many families experience times of crisis within their lives, often through no fault of theirs. Offering to support children and young people during this time enables them to have time out, new experiences and another person outside the family to talk to. All these can help to increase self esteem and confidence. These befriending relationships are always with the agreement of the family and many of them have commented on how they too have been helped by the befriending relationship.

Our volunteer befrienders are skilled in listening to and empathising with young people, bringing their own experiences and abilities into the relationship, provides opportunities for experiences that young people may not have had.

Through this contact, young people learn to relate to and trust an adult outside of the family. It increases their self-esteem and confidence, lowers their stress levels and encourages them to enjoy new activities and interests. It really can make the world of difference.

We recruit, train and screen our volunteers, who are supported by our project team, to act as role models and befrienders to vulnerable young people.

The process: After completing an application form and questionnaire, you will be invited for an interview, where the aims and objectives of our organisation will be discussed in more detail.

At this first point of contact, you will also be required to complete a **Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check** form. **Two references** will also be required. The safety of the young people in our charge is always a high priority.

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121 is a service of Voluntary Action Within Kent
Registered charity number 1108388
Registered company number 5354482





Whilst this is being processed, you will be undertaking your training which consists of an Open Learning Pack which we would ask you to complete in approximately in one month. The Open Learning Pack is also available in CD Rom format and worksheets can be returned via email.

Feedback on your completed Open Learning Pack will be sent from our Training Manager and you will be invited to attend our 121 Extended Volunteer training.

Following the extended training we would then meet to talk through the house keeping processes such as diary sheets and travel expenses forms, and then the matching process would begin.. Each new volunteer is asked to commit a minimum of six months but most of our volunteers have been with us for many years.

Support for our Volunteers. Volunteers will have the contact details of the 121 coordinator plus a number for the on call manager who will be available at all times. This number will be found on the back of your personal identification badge which should be worn or kept with you when working with the young person. 121 will also hold regular events for volunteers to meet and share their experiences with other volunteers and staff.

121 Befriending are always looking for people like you, who can spare just two hours a week to help improve the quality of a young persons life. So if you feel you have the qualities to support a young person during a difficult time, please contact us on our phone number or e-mail address provided.

For further information please call 01892 530330 or email kate.anker@vawk.org.uk